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E.O. 12958: DECL: AFTER KOREAN UNIFICATION
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SUBJECT: PDAS STEPHENS' DISCUSSIONS ON NEAPSM WITH
ASSISTANT FM CUI TIANKAI

REF: BEIJING 4899

Classified By: Acting Political Minister-Counselor Ben Moeling. Reason
s 1.4 (b/d).

11. (C) Summary: China sees a Northeast Asia peace and security mechanism (NEAPSM) as the "logical outcome" of Six-Party Talks, Assistant Foreign Minister Cui Tiankai told EAP PDAS Stephens July 26. AFM Cui finds U.S. thinking on core principles for the regional peace mechanism to be "useful" but cautioned that progress in the NEAPSM Working Group will be dependent on the progress of other working groups, especially the denuclearization group. AFM Cui believes that developing a set of core principles for the NEAPSM will be possible, but observed that it might take time, because the "devil is in the details." Transparency is important but each cited different reasons. China disagrees with the United States about the continued necessity of regional bilateral alliances "from the past" but accepts that if they contribute to peace and security and do not involve third countries, they are "none of China's business." Cui cautioned against "values-based" groupings, such as Japan is pursuing (implicitly the "quad" of U.S.) India) Japan) Australia), warning that such alignments are "not useful." End Summary.

12. (C) EAP PDAS Kathleen Stephens visited Beijing July 25-26 (reftel) to present initial U.S. thinking and learn about Chinese views on the goals and principles of a Northeast Asia Peace and Security Mechanism (NEAPSM). In a July 26 meeting with Assistant Foreign Minister (AFM) Cui Tiankai, PDAS Stephens said that her trip to Tokyo, Seoul and Beijing has been useful for sharing views and brainstorming on the way forward.

Peace Mechanism: "Logical Outcome" of Six-Party Talks

13. (C) China sees a regional mechanism as the "logical outcome" of Six-Party Talks, AFM Cui said. If members of the Six-Party Talks make sufficient progress towards denuclearization, there could also be progress towards establishing a regional peace and security mechanism. The initial members of such a mechanism should be the members of the Six-Party process "for quite some time to come," he added. Other nations in the region might be allowed to participate but only later on. Referring to PDAS Stephens' earlier presentation of initial U.S. thinking to his MFA colleagues, AFM Cui said he finds the U.S.-proposed core principles "useful." In particular, he noted the importance of Six-Party Talks, confidence building measures, peaceful settlement of disputes and transparency. He highlighted transparency and said that individual countries' plans and policies, including bilateral relationships and alliances,

should be transparent. PDAS Stephens added that the United States also wants to see transparency in military programs, defense budgets and military capability. She noted that U.S. alliances in the region contribute to peace and stability and are a fundamental tenet of the United States' approach.

14. (C) Progress in the NEAPSM Working Group will be dependent on the progress of other working groups, especially denuclearization, said AFM Cui. China is pleased North Korea committed to denuclearization in the February 13 agreement and that North Korea and the United States are looking towards normalization of relations. Because denuclearization will not be easy, he encouraged the development of mutual trust "to overcome future obstacles." The start of the Six-Party Talks was rocky, with North Korea and the United States refusing to sit in the same room, reminisced AFM Cui. Gradually, the delegations changed and EAP Assistant Secretary Christopher Hill made a "successful" trip to North

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Korea. "We've come a long way, but the road ahead may still be long. We will need patience." PDAS Stephens agreed that we have come a long way, and said we must continue to be persistent. "We need to combine a sense of patience with a sense of urgency," she said. "We will be stubborn about this. We are committed to persevering."

The Road Ahead

15. (C) One positive aspect of the September 2005 agreement is that it lays out several mutually reinforcing areas of action, PDAS Stephens said. If it is possible to make progress on the declaration and disabling phase of denuclearization in coming months, it might also be possible to set a goal for the Working Group to come to agreement on

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the key principles of the NEAPSM in a set period of time, she suggested. AFM Cui agreed that there is a common need among the Six-Party members to work towards common principles, but the "devil is in the details." A statement of general principles could be drafted relatively quickly, but if the goals of a NEAPSM go into any depth, he predicted that this will take some time to negotiate among all members and will need to be handled "skillfully." At present, there is insufficient trust among the various Six-Party members, especially in the U.S.-North Korea and Japan-North Korea relationships. The United States-China relationship also does not have "100 percent total mutual trust" because of a lack of transparency, he said. "Physical transparency is easy," he said. "Just log on to Google Earth." But in our hearts and minds, he continued, "it is not so clear."

16. (C) There also needs to be a better understanding of how bilateral relationships will impact the multilateral process, AFM Cui continued. Alliances in the region are remnants of the past, he said. If, however, U.S. alliances in the region "contribute to peace, and do not interfere with or involve third parties, then they are none of our business," he conceded. Bilateral issues such as those between Japan and North Korea need to be "controlled and contained." Any attempt to hold Four-Party peace talks would first need to be reconciled with the Six-Party mechanism, AFM Cui said. China believes no country in the region should be in possession of nuclear weapons except the P5, but he acknowledged that it may be a challenge to present this principle to the other Parties. AFM Cui said he is not optimistic that these issues can be resolved before the ministerial meeting.

Shared Interests vs. Shared Values

17. (C) AFM Cui reflected on the Northeast Asia process along with U.S. participation in the development of a "grouping" (referring to the United States, Australia, Japan and India)

in the region based on shared values. "Efforts in Northeast Asia will intersect with other parts of Asia. Setting up such "values groupings" is not useful," he declared. The United States and China share common interests and it is "not wise" to put an emphasis on shared values. PDAS Stephens responded that shared interests are important, and can be the basis for a partnership, but shared values are even more important. The U.S.-ROK alliance is a case in point, she said; the alliance began on the basis of shared U.S. and Korean interests and has evolved into a much deeper relationship based on shared values.

18. (U) PDAS Stephens cleared this cable.
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